

Literature I – Mid-term Assignment

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Group: Second

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Marks: % |

BEOWULF

Beowulf is considered the greatest old English poem. Although it is difficult to understand because it's written in a mixture of West Saxon and Anglian dialects, it is a perfect portrait of life in the days it was written and that's what makes it the greatest old English poem.

It is an epic poem and it was written in times when poems were narrations and told stories about heroes or gods, as those from the Bible. Beowulf tells about the tribal history of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes after the Roman Empire was over. Other poems, taken from the Bible and from Caedmon and Cynewulf were mainly religious. Even though the author of the written version of Beowulf seems to be a Christian, the hero Beowulf has his origins in an earlier pagan era. The action in the poem takes place in the fifth century, after the Anglo-Saxons had migrated and settled in the territory that today corresponds to England. At this point the Saxons had tight bounds to Germanic clans in Scandinavia and Northern Germany. There's the theory that the stories told in Beowulf were passed from generation to generation by word of mouth by people of Geatish origins, and that the poem was written in the seventh century in East Anglia.

As an old English poem Beowulf has alliterations as he main figure of poetry instead of rhyme, which is the main figure in modern poetry. This technique consists of similar sounds at the beginning of the words in a verse. Another important technique in Beowulf is the use of kennings, which are ways of referring to things not by their names, but by describing them by poetic evocations. This technique is used with poetic purposes but also to serve alliterations and metre. Kennings are similar to metaphors, which are used all along the poem as well. According to some authors Beowulf is an elegy, not only because of how it is written, but also because of what it is about.

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